

Remarks of Consul General Dennis Hankins
U.S. Election Night Event, November 6, 2012

Good evening. I am Consul General Dennis Hankins, and I would like welcome all our guests to the United States Consulate General in Sao Paulo.

Election night in the United States is an important night for all Americans. It is the culmination of a long process that began with multiple candidates, primaries across the states, and much discussion of the issues that affect all of us today --from economics, healthcare, and job creation, to foreign policy, events in the Middle East, and immigration.

Much is made of the divisiveness in American political discourse today. Certainly we face our share of challenges: a shifting landscape of campaign finance laws and political rancor that plays out publicly across the internet.

But if achieving consensus seems difficult these days, I would suggest to you that the true strength of our electoral process is contained elsewhere. It lies within the same foundation upon which American democracy rests: our strong civil society. A civil society whose members are daily participants in the project of governing, not only at a national level, but locally as well. As county judges and elected sheriffs. As members of city councils and school boards.

We are members of a strong civil society that debate, discuss, and argue among ourselves to create a more perfect democracy.

Regardless of the outcome of tonight's election, whether your preferred candidate wins or loses, what will not change is our commitment to the principles that make our elections possible --- our respect for and faith in the rule of law, our support for independent institutions, and our belief in free expression and a free press.

It is on election night that I feel particularly proud to be engaged in public service, and it is why we wanted to bring our American and Brazilian friends together to enjoy tonight's festivities. I hope that the Americans here have all voted, and that our Brazilian guests participated in our mock ballot. Because ultimately, our elections are a celebration of the American political system. And they demonstrate the lasting strength of our democracy.

A number of people have asked me whether United States policy in the Americas, or towards Brazil, will change as result of the elections. My answer is that we as diplomats represent the United States government and the American people. It will remain the policy of the United States in the Americas to support democratic institutions, economic opportunity, social inclusion, respect for human rights, independent civil society groups, and the accountability of governments to their people.

Thanks to all of you for joining us tonight.